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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: ANTI-TRAFFICKING AGENCY ARRESTS AND DISPLAYS TWO "JUJU MEN," ALSO ARRESTS TWO TRAFFICKERS

REF: ABUJA 1373

1. Summary. At a press conference on August 10, Nigeria's anti-trafficking agency announced the arrests of two "juju men" (practitioners of fetish magic). The two juju men were used to facilitate prostitution and trafficking by scaring victims to silence. The following week, the agency announced the arrests of two accused traffickers. End Summary.

2. The National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP) held a press conference on August 10 to announce the arrests of two "juju men" (practitioners of fetish magic) who allegedly engaged in recruiting victims of human trafficking in Edo State. Besides the assembled media, NAPTIP invited representatives of the US and Japanese embassies, along with the anti-trafficking program heads of the International Labor Organization (ILO) and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

3. The juju men are being held by NAPTIP as prosecution witnesses, which NAPTIP hopes will puncture the myth of juju. Trafficking victims rarely agree to testify against their traffickers, because of juju oaths of silence they have taken, the violation of which would result in their deaths (refel). A NAPTIP spokesman said that seeing the juju men in custody might encourage victims to break their oaths and speak out.

4. The two juju men, Prince Omoruyi of Ehengbuda shrine and Goddy Akhimeon of Uromi, were brought into the press conference and asked by NAPTIP's head of investigation to describe the items on display, which had been confiscated from their shrines. Clippings of women's pubic hair and fingernails would be kept in the shrine until the "curse" was lifted. The juju men explained that they "blessed" the semen of male customers of prostitutes in order to prevent the transmission of AIDS; a pile of semen-stained tissues was displayed among the evidence. Both juju men kept diaries containing names, dates, and countries where women were trafficked. One juju man showed an oracle guide he used to "bless" women that they do well as prostitutes in Western Europe, well enough "to marry white men." Dozens of photos of trafficked women were on display; media were requested not to retransmit any of the victims' images.

5. NAPTIP's head of investigation specifically mentioned the USG, telling Poloff before the assembled media that the USG should look at NAPTIP's prosecution of the juju men as a "best practices" model. He said that the two cases would be filed in Benin City, Edo State, where the juju men were arrested.

6. He also stated that investigation is capital intensive, requiring significant travel by investigators both inside Nigeria and abroad. He announced to the press that NAPTIP works together with the "anti-mafia bureau" in Italy, which shares information with NAPTIP, and with the USG, which had helped to fund "sensitization tours" to eleven southern states.

7. The following week, NAPTIP announced the arrests of two Edo State residents for trafficking. A NAPTIP spokesman told Poloff that one female trafficker had brought three women to Cotonou, Benin, by promising them jobs in Italy, then left them to support themselves through prostitution and returned to Edo State to get more women. The group in Cotonou refused to engage in prostitution, forcing the "madam" to return to Benin, where she reported to the Nigerian Embassy in Cotonou that "her girls were misbehaving." The Embassy suspected trafficking and contacted NAPTIP, who arrested the woman, along with her Nigerian partner. The spokesman told Poloff a conviction is "near certain" with the evidence and victims' testimony.

8. Comment: Nothing is certain with the Nigerian judiciary, however, except that the pace of justice is very slow. While the arrests show some good efforts on the part of the GON, it remains to be seen whether those efforts will be translated into results, in the form of convictions. End Comment.

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